



Why is AFF Important?

NACARE, the Network of Archdiocesan/diocesan Contacts of Adult Religious Education has created this resource to assist you and your parish in implementing the vision of Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us. It is our intent to develop additional resources throughout the coming years to enable adult faith formation to become, "the axis around which revolves the catechesis of childhood and adolescence as well as that of old age." OHWB #5

Series 1, Article 1 - What is Adult Faith Formation?

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Please consider using this process with parish adult faith formation teams, catechists for adults, parish pastoral leaders, or parish pastoral council members.

1. OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray.

Loving God, we ask the guidance of your Holy Spirit upon us as we open our minds and hearts to your presence in our lives, and in our parish community. May we listen to each other today knowing that you are present in each of us. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Scripture: Emmaus Story

Now, on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking, and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them. He asked them "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. Then, he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. When he was at table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" Luke 24: 13-15, 19, 20, 25-27,30-32

Reflection Question:

Recall a moment when you encountered God in your life that left "your heart burning"?

*From Our Hearts
Were Burning*

Within Us

*Adult Faith Formation,
by which people
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OHWB #5

2. STORY OF FAITH

Judy was a cradle Catholic who grew up in an increasingly inactive Catholic family. Her father had a bad experience with his pastor growing up, and he always held onto that experience. Her dad also believed that many who attended Sunday Mass were hypocritical in the way they lived. He firmly believed that Church really didn't make a difference. He rarely attended Church and encouraged his family to do the same.

When Judy went off to college, she met her college sweetheart, a young man who took his Catholic faith seriously. As time moved on, they began talking about marriage. Judy realized she wanted to be married in the Catholic Church. She visited the Newman Center to inquire about preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage. She soon found herself sharing her faith story with Father Sam, the chaplain. He invited her to join a weekly student-led faith sharing group. During this time, she came to fully appreciate the fullness of the Catholic faith. Judy's journey also helped to invigorate her husband's faith and blessed their relationship. Today, she is an active member of her parish.

Reflection:

What does this story tell you about the role of adult faith formation in one's life?

3. WHY IS ADULT FAITH FORMATION SO IMPORTANT?

If you've read a Catholic periodical or Church document in the last few years, you have more than likely read about Evangelization. Whether the article was on the challenge of adolescent catechesis, reaching out to those who are alienated from the Church, or engaging adults more significantly in faith formation, the topic always seems to come down to a conversation on evangelization.

Evangelization is the primary mission of the Church. Indeed the Church "exists in order to evangelize." (Pope Paul, VI, *On Evangelization in the Modern World* # 10) The work of evangelization requires a mature faith assisted by the ongoing work of adult faith formation. Evangelization is not limited to its former meaning of making Christians out of non-Christians. Rather, there is a new understanding of evangelization that is needed in order to enliven the faith of the already baptized and to invite them into a

personal dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ in and through the Christian community. (*The Mission of Christ the Redeemer* # 33) The *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) and the *National Directory for Catechesis* (NDC) clearly place adult faith formation within the framework of evangelization. Evangelization sets the foundation for adult faith formation. Adult Faith Formation seeks to nurture an encounter with the Lord that leads the believer to a deepening conversion, communion and discipleship. Increasing our love for the Lord will naturally move us to learn more about him so we can share him with others.

Here is how the Bishops stated this in *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*:

- Invite and Enable Ongoing Conversion to Jesus in Holiness of Life;
- Promote and Support Active Membership in the Christian Community;
- Call and Prepare Adults to Act as Disciples in Mission to the World.

OHWB #67-73

At the parish level, our challenge is to create opportunities for busy adult Catholics to recognize and further develop their on-going relationship with Jesus Christ. "Adult Faith Formation by which people consciously grow in the life of Christ through experience, prayer, reflection and study, must be the central task of the catechetical enterprise."

OHWB #5

Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us states, "Whatever we can do in Catholic parishes and dioceses to encourage lifelong involvement in church life and faith formation will bear fruit in strengthened Christian community and mission." (OHWB # 123) Judy in our story of faith certainly experienced this from her parish community.

Reflection:

Who is looking to you to experience Christ today?

Why do you think Adult Faith Formation is so important?

From the General Directory for Catechesis

"Catechesis, situated in the context of the Church's mission of evangelization and seen as an essential moment of that mission, receives from evangelization a missionary dynamic which deeply enriches it and defines its own identity"
GDC #59

4. PRACTICAL APPLICATION

As a group, reflect on and complete the following chart for your parish.

- Jot down the needs/concerns of each age group in the appropriate box.
- Add to each box how the parish already addresses these needs.

Since this chart will serve as the foundation for future planning, please allow adequate time for this process. (30 – 60 minutes)

	Personal Encounter	Community	Mission
	Invite & enable ongoing conversion to Jesus in Holiness of Life	Promote & support active membership in the Christian Community	Call and prepare adults to act as disciples in mission to the world.
ADULTS (ages 19-35)			
ADULTS (ages 35-60)			
ADULTS (ages 60 and older)			

How can the *National Directory for Catechesis* quote, on the following page, guide our efforts to integrate these needs/concerns into our future adult faith formation planning/programming?

5. CLOSING PRAYER

God, our Father, you call us to open our hearts to your Spirit. May we continue to be a living example of Christ in this world, and come to appreciate your presence more in our lives through our time gathered at this meeting. Help us to share what we have experienced here with our family and friends so your light can truly be present in our world today. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

6. SUGGESTION FOR FOLLOW-UP

Consider implementing faith sharing at all parish meetings on the upcoming Sunday Gospel with this format:

Make the sign of the cross.

Step 1: One person proclaims the Gospel. Participants answer the questions, "What do you SEE in the Gospel?"

What image or picture comes to mind? Share with the group.

Step 2: Another person reads the Gospel, again. This time answer the questions,

"What do you HEAR in the Gospel?"

What phrase or word stands out more clearly than another?
Tell the group.

Step 3: Read the Gospel again. Connect what you HEARD with what you SAW in the Gospel.

Answer the questions,
"What do I need to DO to follow Jesus better?"

"How can I connect the Gospel to my daily life?" Discuss.

Conclude with intercessions and the Lord's Prayer.

RESOURCES:

- *General Directory for Catechesis*, United States Catholic Conference of Bishops; Copyright 1997. Order Number: 1-800-235-8722
- *National Directory for Catechesis*, United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, Copyright 2005.
- *Nurturing Adult Faith; A Manual for Parish Leaders*, National Conference for Catechetical Leadership; Copyright 2003, Order number: 202-636-3826
- *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, United States Catholic Conference of Bishops; Copyright 1999
- *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, Copyright 2006.
- www.CNAFF.org

*From the National Directory
for Catechesis*

"To be effective ministers of adult faith formation we will first, like Jesus, join people in their daily concerns and walk side by side with them on the pathway of life. We will ask questions and listen attentively as they speak of their joys, hopes, grief, and anxieties.

Most adults are capable of a free and informed response of faith to God's initiative of love. They "have a right and a duty to bring to maturity the seed of faith sown in them by God.

The catechesis of adults... is the principal form of catechesis, because it is addressed to persons who have the greatest responsibilities and the capacity to live the Christian message in its fully developed form."

NDC # 48